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SUBJECT: KIGALI CITY ELECTS WOMAN MAYOR

REF: A. KIGALI 183

[1](#)B. KIGALI 146

[1](#)1. Summary: In the final phase of 2006 local elections March 4, a woman parliamentarian was elected mayor of Kigali by an overwhelming majority. As in the earlier phases of the electoral process (reftels), voter turnout was high. An estimated 94 percent of the electoral college, comprised of elected members of the District Council and Sector Council Bureau, participated by secret ballot in the indirect election of the mayor and five other municipal officials. Foreign Affairs Minister Charles Murigande thanked the electors and the National Electoral Commission, and reminded the newly elected officials of their role as public servants. He urged them to carry out with integrity the duties entrusted to them during their five-year term. End summary.

[1](#)2. On March 4, in the final phase of 2006 local elections, District Council and Sector Council Bureau members elected by secret ballot six Kigali City officials, including the mayor and two vice-mayors, to manage the city on a day-to-day basis. Woman parliamentarian Dr. Aissa Kirabo Kakira, member of the ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), was elected mayor by an overwhelming majority of votes (164 to 12) over the other female candidate. According to the National Electoral Commission (NEC), approximately 94 percent of the electoral college participated in the election.

[1](#)3. Dr. Kakira thanked the electors for their support, and the NEC for its effective organization of the elections. She pointed out that a significant number of female candidates participated in the elections and hoped that that this trend would continue.

[1](#)4. On behalf of the government, Foreign Affairs Minister Murigande also thanked the electors for their participation. He expressed his gratitude to NEC and the electoral college for concluding the local elections with integrity and transparency. (Note: Prominently displayed banners in the local language outside the polling station urged voters to vote for their leaders with "integrity, freedom, and transparency." End note.) Murigande noted that organization of elections in Africa, as elsewhere in the world, is a big and difficult task, at times complicated by confrontation, contested results, and other irregularities. He pointed out that the elections in Rwanda were conducted peacefully and successfully as a result of NEC's efforts.

[1](#)5. Murigande extended his appreciation to the newly elected officials, reminding them of the trust given to them by the people of Kigali City through their representatives. He

urged them to uphold the trust during their five-year mandate and expressed the hope that at the end of their term they could show Kigali City that this trust had been used wisely for the benefit of the people. Reminding them that there are those in Rwanda who seek leadership positions for private gain, Murigande expressed the hope that the newly elected officials sought their positions for the benefit of Kigali City and that they would make sacrifices so that the city could achieve great things.

¶6. The elections, like the earlier elections at the cell, sector, and district levels, were peaceful with no signs of coercion, intimidation or harassment of voters. Overall, the process appeared fair and transparent, despite some minor inconsistencies. The ballot box remained unsealed throughout the day, but was within full view of voters and observers. Ballots were stamped by NEC, and five armed National Police provided visible but unobtrusive security.

¶7. Biography: Dr. Kakira was elected as one of two women's representatives from the former Umutara Province in the 2003 legislative elections and served as Member of Parliament in the Chamber of Deputies until her resignation March 4, 2005. Previously, she served as Extension Manager in the Ministry of Agriculture (2000-03), Program Manager for Oxfam-Great Britain (1997-2001), and Veterinary Project Officer for Handicap International Rwanda (1996-1997). She holds a Masters of Science degree in tropical veterinary medicine and economics from James Cook University, Australia (1995), and a Bachelors degree in veterinary medicine from Makerere University, Uganda (1992). She has been a member of the Rwanda Women Leaders' Caucus, Rwandan Women Parliamentary Forum, Parliamentary Forum for Sustainable Development, and Parliamentary Amani Group (an association focused on regional development and peaceful conflict resolution). As a Rwandan born in Uganda, she holds dual citizenship. She is fluent in English and Finnish. Her husband is an officer in the Rwandan Defense Forces. She will replace Theoneste Mutsindashyaka who was appointed governor of the Eastern Province in January 2006.

¶8. Comment: Local sources predict that the administration of Kigali City will not change significantly as a result of the new mayor assuming power. All phases of local elections were generally conducted in an orderly and efficient manner despite some minor logistical problems and possible political influence. The next elections will be parliamentary elections in 2008, followed by presidential elections in 2010 and local elections in 2011.

ARIETTI